

# INTERVENOR'S POST HEARING LETTER

Dear Connecticut Siting Council Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to be part of our political process. In the case of Docket 451 it does not appear an approval can be granted as several pressing questions remain.

## QUESTIONS OF APPROVAL

Did the Town of Cheshire speak for the residents of Cheshire when they approved the land lease for the cell tower which started this process in motion? There can be no cell tower lease without a cell tower, so by approving the lease the Town approved the tower as well. The Cheshire Town Council voted on this tower without voter input. There was no referendum and no public hearing. In fact their negotiations with ATT and Homeland Towers were kept quiet. A recent article in the Cheshire Herald only quoted town employees excited about the tower although a letter to the editor had previously been submitted by concerned citizens. The first opportunity the public had to take part in this discussion came at the "moderately attended" Connecticut Siting Council public hearing. A larger turnout would have been expected, but that would mean Cheshire residents would need to be aware of the tower zoning proposal. If you were to ask residents about the tower you would likely find they have no knowledge of it or they "don't think zoning would ever approve it." The Town has misrepresented the opinion of Cheshire residents when it states the Town supports the tower. Cheshire's most recent tower proposal in the same residential zone was opposed by residents and the tower was moved to the Cheshire Police Department in the commercial zone. The townspeople have spoken.

## QUESTIONS OF NEED

Did the applicants prove a true need for the tower? ATT and Homeland Towers are the applicants for this tower. The Town of Cheshire is a Party. These roles have become blurred. In fact, the Cheshire Citizen reporter who attended the last Connecticut Siting Council meeting wrote that ATT and the Town of Cheshire are co-applicants of the tower based on the evidence he heard at the meeting. The question of need is based on the applicants' need, yet ATT is using the Town's need as leverage. Independently ATT has not proven a strong need for the tower. There are other sites to be exhausted before a 180' commercial cell phone tower is sited in a densely populated residential zone at a children's recreational facility. In addition, due to "topography and obstructions" ATT's post-tower models still show spotty coverage and miss Rte 70 almost completely. The two residents who spoke in favor of the tower at the CSC public hearing likely won't see improved coverage. One lives on the south side of town (out of range) and the other gets service outside his house, but not inside (possible obstruction?) What will public response be when a 180' cell tower is erected and service is not improved? This will be the case for any resident out of range, using another provider or with obstructions. ATT would not provide numbers on current subscribers so we don't know how many residents stand to benefit. Currently many residents receive great service with other providers in the ATT "dead zone." A corporation's competitive need does not equal a community need.

## QUESTIONS OF ADVERSE VISUAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Has this topic been proven in any way? The people who would be effected live in the surrounding neighborhoods. ATT provided studies but did not connect with the community who would be effected. Balloons were raised in the middle of the work day with full leaf coverage on the trees. Some residents at the CSC public hearing noted the "gray balloon" was hard to see. Photos were taken from select locations. However, the best views of the Quinnipiac River Valley are from private property. No real estate appraisal studies were conducted and the adverse effect of property depreciation on the Town's tax base was not discussed. Most importantly, the visual and environmental effects at the Quinnipiac Recreation Park are being overlooked by the applicants. The applicants consider the birds and turtles in the adjacent wetlands, but after much discussion at the CSC hearing, the applicants still don't acknowledge the site is shared with a childrens' soccer campus in their post hearing brief.

## QUESTIONS OF ELEVATION

How is a site with one of the lowest elevations in the area the ideal location for a cell tower? A 100' above sea level this location is surrounded by elevated neighborhoods and a significant elevation change on the west side. The cliff that elevates the neighborhoods is likely the "topography" that prevents residents as close as Wolf Hill Road from seeing improved service in the post-tower models. The 180' tower height with wasted space at the bottom would not be required at a higher location. Aside from the fact that the Town of Cheshire owns the land and is open to a lease arrangement, it's difficult to see how this low-lying site is optimal.

## QUESTIONS OF TOWN NEED

Can the Town of Cheshire meet its future emergency communication needs independently? This month residents voted overwhelmingly in favor of upgrading the Cheshire Fire Department equipment. It is likely residents will also approve the emergency communication system when it come to a referendum vote. The Cheshire Police and Fire Chiefs both spoke of needing coverage in the I-691 interchange zone while ATT noted that area, which is zoned industrial, would overlap ATT's existing coverage. Also, the applicants note the 180' tower height was driven by the Town's emergency equipment. A Town tower sited at the optimal location would likely not need 180', could possibly be in the northern industrial zone and would not have the appearance and effects of a corporate cell phone tower. When the Town of Cheshire does its own site study and funds it's own equipment we will discover what works best for our community.

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Thank you again for the opportunity to intervene at the Connecticut Siting Council hearings regarding Docket 451. We trust the Council's final judgment and wish you and your families a Happy Thanksgiving.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Arcesi  
Intervenor

Gary Wassmer  
Intervenor